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מנקודת ראות ירושלמית

# Jerusalem Perspective

Exploring the Jewish Background to the Life and Words of Jesus



Ray Pritz "He Shall Be Called a Nazarene"

David Bivin "Jehovah" — A Christian Misunderstanding

Marvin R. Wilson The *Shema* in Early Jewish Teaching





*In the Nov/Dec 1990 issue, on page 14, David Bivin incorrectly quoted Luke 16:19-31 using the word "Gehenna." This word is not found either in my Greek text, or my Hebrew New Testa-*

*ment in these verses. I realize that this was not the subject under consideration, but the statement reflects the general religious opinion in our time due to taking figurative writings literally.*  
—Joel R. Kemp, Pensacola, Florida, U.S.A.

## David Bivin responds:

I'm happy you paid such close attention to my translation, particularly since it took me several days of work to reach a decision about how to translate the word to which you refer (for my translation of the whole passage, see JP 1.12 [September 1988], 4).

You are correct, the Greek text reads ἐν τῇ ᾗδῃ (*en tō hadē*, in Hades). However, in this context ᾗδῃ (*hadēs*, Hades) is not equivalent to the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל (*she'OL*, the grave; death), but rather to גֵּהֵנָם (*ge-hi-NOM*, Gehenna; hell), a meaning which *hadēs* also can have (see Joachim Jeremias, "ᾗδῃ" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids:

William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964], 1:146-149).

It seems clear that the rich man was not sleeping in the grave, but rather was in torment (vs. 23) in a place of fire (vs. 24), what today we often refer to as "hell." For that reason the *New International Version* translates: "In hell, where he was in torment."

It is true that both the Hebrew translation of Delitzsch (1870) and that of the Israel Bible Society (1976) render *hadēs* by its standard Septuagintal equivalent שְׁאוֹל (*she'OL*), but I think that is a mistake. In the Septuagint, *hadēs* is normally the translation of גֵּהֵנָם (*ge-hi-NOM*) (61 times). Not surprisingly it is never the translation of שְׁאוֹל (*she'OL*) since that is a post-biblical Hebrew word which does not appear in the Hebrew Scriptures. (The transliteration γέεννα [*geenna*], apparently representing the Hebrew *ge-hi-NOM*, is used eleven times in the synoptic Gospels and once in James 3:6.)

Much of the later Second Temple period Hebrew vocabulary such as *ge-hi-NOM*, along with many of the additional nuances that some Hebrew words came to have in that period, are not found in the Hebrew Scriptures and consequently have no Septuagintal equivalents. Therefore mechanically reconstructing Greek texts to Hebrew on the basis of Sep-

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## Jerusalem Perspective

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*Cover photo: Nazareth as it looked in April, 1949. Since then the population, now approximately 60,000, has more than tripled.*  
(Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office)

# "He Shall Be Called a Nazarene"

One of the titles given to Jesus was "Nazarene." Where did the title come from, and did it have any special significance? Dr. Pritz traces its origins.

by Ray Pritz

**T**he title "Nazarene" may have derived from the town of Nazareth where Jesus grew up, but this is not at all certain. Nazareth is never mentioned in rabbinic literature nor in any other writing outside the New Testament before its mention by the Hebrew poets of the seventh or eighth century. Its first post-New Testament appearance came with the discovery of an inscription listing the twenty-four priestly courses. This inscription, found in the summer of 1962 in a synagogue in Caesarea, has been dated to the third or fourth century.<sup>1</sup> The spelling of the name is נצר (nats-RAT), the same as in the much later Hebrew poets.

## Two Problems

The New Testament starting point for investigating the title Nazarene must be Matthew 2:23: "[Joseph] came and resided in a city called Nazareth so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled: 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'"

This was one of the most difficult verses faced by the editorial committee of the annotated edition of the United Bible Societies' modern Hebrew New Testament. The main problem is that nowhere in the extant body of Scripture do we find the statement which Matthew seems to quote from the Prophets.

## Which Prophecy?

Matthew uses the Greek word Ναζωραῖος (*Nazōraios*) for the title by which Jesus will be called according to "the prophets." This most likely represents the Hebrew word נצר (nats-RI), a name by which Jesus is called several times in the Talmud.<sup>2</sup> The name נצרים (nats-RIM, plural of nats-RI)

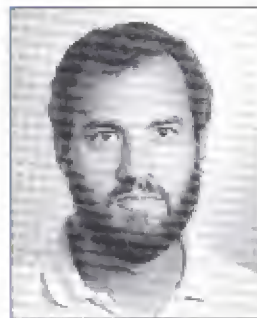
referring to believers in Jesus also occurs in the Talmud.<sup>3</sup> Many of these passages were removed by censors and can be found today only in collections of expunged passages taken from earlier manuscripts of the Talmud.

The Hebrew word *nats-RI* occurs six times in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>4</sup> In all cases it carries the sense of preserving or keeping. Some translations render the word in Jeremiah 4:16 as "enemies" or something similar (*New American Standard Bible*, *Good News Bible*, *New International Version*). However, other translations are consistent with the other references and speak of "watchers" (*The Holy Scriptures* [Jewish Publication Society of America], Luther's sixteenth-century German translation, the Latin Vulgate). None of the other Gospels provides a parallel to Matthew's statement, which comes at the end of his infancy narrative.

After fleeing to Egypt to escape Herod's slaughter of the children in the area of Bethlehem, Joseph has been told it is safe to return to the land of Israel. However, since Herod's son Archelaus is ruling in Judea, Joseph, Jesus and Mary do not return there but continue on north to Galilee, which had been given as a tetrarchy to another of Herod's sons, Antipas. This move to Nazareth prompts Matthew to comment on the fulfillment of prophecy.

## Fulfilled Prophecy

Such an emphasis on fulfilled prophecy is peculiar to Matthew, occurring over a dozen times in his Gospel, and in fact he had already used the formula four times previous to 2:23.<sup>5</sup> We get an idea of Matthew's methods if we note that in all of the four quotations before this one he



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either mentioned a prophet by name or said “the prophet” (singular) in connection with a quotation which can be easily found almost exactly as quoted.

This pattern holds true for all other such quotes in Matthew, with three exceptions. One is in 26:56 where he also cites “the prophets”; the second is in 27:9 and 10, where he credits Jeremiah as the source for a statement which is found primarily in Zechariah; and the third is here in 2:23. A candidate for the source of Matthew’s quote should be clearly connected to a known prophecy or, to use Matthew’s phrase, “the prophets,” and it should have an evident link with Nazareth.

## Nazirite

One possible source is Judges 13:5, where the angel of the LORD tells the wife of Manoah that her son, Samson, will be a Nazirite.

This potential solution has two serious problems besides the fact that it is not a prophecy in the sense in which Matthew normally uses the word. First of all, as far as we know Jesus was not a Nazirite. Indeed, he said of himself: “The Son of Man has come eating and drinking and you say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard’” (Lk. 7:34).

The other difficulty is that the Hebrew root for Nazirite, נָזַר (*n-z-r*) is not the same as that for Nazareth: נֶזֶר (*n-ts-r*). The similarity of the two words is only superficial. English versions of the Bible use only one letter (*z*) to express the two Hebrew letters נ, the “*z*” sound, and צ, the “*ts*” sound. Greek generally uses the letter ζ (*zeta*) to represent the Hebrew נ (as it does in Judges 13:5) and the letter σ (*sigma*) for צ. However there are also instances of צ being transliterated as *zeta*.<sup>6</sup>

## Netser

The challenge is to find a scriptural prophecy or prophetic idea which yet maintains a connection with the town of Nazareth. One long-standing candidate has been Isaiah 11:1 which says, “A shoot will come forth from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.” The word for “branch” is נֶטֶר (*NEtser*), which contains the same three consonants that form the root of the name Nazareth.

When we look in the Targum at the Aramaic translation of this verse, we see that the verse was interpreted messianically: “There shall come forth a king from the sons of Jesse, and a Messiah will grow

from the sons of his sons.” The Targum goes on to read the Messiah into verses 6 and 10. The first ten verses of this chapter of Isaiah were almost always interpreted in Jewish midrashic literature as referring to the Messiah.<sup>7</sup> One interesting baraita<sup>8</sup> shows disciples of Jesus using Isaiah 11:1 in arguing with the rabbis about the messiahship of Jesus.

An attractive feature of Isaiah 11:1 as the source for Matthew’s statement is that not only is the verse itself messianic, but it also can be connected to a broader messianic context. The idea of the Messiah as a branch is found elsewhere in the prophets, although using other words than *NEtser* for branch. So, for example, Isaiah 53:2 speaks of a tender shoot (צֶמַח, *yo-NEK*) and a root (שֹׁרֶשׁ, *SHO-resh*) out of dry ground. In Jeremiah 23:5 we read: “Behold days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up a righteous plant (צֶמֶח, *TSE-mah*) for David, and a king will reign and will bring about justice and salvation in the land.” *TSE-mah* is also used of a messianic figure in Jeremiah 33:15 and Zechariah 3:8 (“my servant, the Branch”) and 6:12.

When Matthew says that in going to Nazareth, Jesus was fulfilling something spoken by “the prophets,” perhaps he intended to point to the one idea which most unifies the biblical prophets, the idea of the Messiah.<sup>9</sup> Here, then, we have a solution to the puzzle of Matthew 2:23 which connects with “the prophets” while still linking to one prophetic verse which bears an etymological tie to the name of the town where Jesus went to live. **JP**

1. M. Avi-Yonah, *Eretz-Israel* 7 (1964), 24–28.

2. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 43<sup>a</sup>, 103<sup>a</sup>, 107<sup>b</sup>; Sotah 47<sup>a</sup>; Avodah Zarah 16<sup>b</sup>, 17<sup>a</sup>.

3. Babylonian Talmud, Avodah Zarah 6<sup>a</sup> and Ta’anit 27<sup>b</sup>.

4. II Kings 17:9, 18:8; Ps. 25:10, 119:2; Jer. 4:16, 31:6.

5. Mt. 1:22–23, 2:5–6, 15, 17–18.

6. See G.F. Moore in Jackson-Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity, The Acts of the Apostles* (repr. Grand Rapids, MI, 1979), 1:427; and F.C. Burkitt, *Syriac Forms of New Testament Proper Names*, (London, 1912), pp. 28–30.

7. Lamentations Rabbah 1:51; Tanhuma, *Voyehi* 10, 110; Genesis Rabbah 3:4, 97:9, 99:8; Ruth Rabbah 7:2; Song of Songs Rabbah VI, 10, 6; Shohar Tov 21, 72.

8. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 43<sup>a</sup>. The term baraita refers to any of the halachot or sayings not included in the Mishnah of Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi, that is sayings that predate 230 A.D.

9. See Acts 3:24; Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 99<sup>a</sup>.

# “Jehovah” — A Christian Misunderstanding

by David Bivin

In any attempt to understand the Bible, there is no substitute for a knowledge of ancient Jewish custom and practice. For example, the term “Jehovah,” which is found in many Christian translations of the Bible, originated because of a lack of awareness of Jewish custom.

## Pronunciation

In Hebrew Scripture the personal name of God is written with four Hebrew letters — יהוה (YHWH)<sup>1</sup> — and therefore called the tetragrammaton. This name appears more than 6000 times in the Hebrew Scriptures.

By linguistic comparisons with other ancient Semitic languages, scholars can be almost certain that the divine name was originally pronounced *yah-WEH*. The pronunciation of the first syllable of the tetragrammaton

is confirmed by the abbreviated form of God’s name, יה (yah), transcribed “Jah” in the King James Version) which is sometimes used in biblical poetry (Ps. 68:4). It is also confirmed by the יה (yah) which is attached as a suffix to many Hebrew names such as אֵלִיָּהּ (*‘e-li-YAH*, Elijah) and עֲבַדְיָהּ (*‘o-vad-YAH*, Obadiah).

In the First Temple period, at least until the Babylonian Exile in 586 B.C., the divine name was regularly pronounced in daily life.<sup>2</sup> By the third century B.C., although the tetragrammaton was pronounced by priests in certain Temple liturgies,<sup>3</sup> Jews avoided its use, employing instead many other substitutes such as הַמָּקוֹם (*ha-ma-KOM*, the Place), הַגְּבוּהָ (*ha-ga-VO-ah*, the High), הַלְשׁוֹן (*ha-la-SHON*, the Tongue), הַקּוֹצֵץ (*haq-vu-RAH*, the Power, compare Luke 22:69) and שָׁמַיִם (*sha-MA-yim*, Heaven). When reading or reciting Scripture, the custom was to substitute אֲדֹנָי (*‘a-do-NAI*, LORD, literally, “my lords”) for the

tetragrammaton, or to substitute אֱלֹהִים (*‘e-lo-HIM*) when the tetragrammaton happened to appear together with אֲדֹנָי.<sup>4</sup> Even the less distinctive אֱלֹהִים (*‘e-lo-HIM*, God), which also could mean “false gods,” was avoided in conversation.

The reticence to pronounce the divine name was due to a literal interpretation of the third commandment (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11): “You shall not take the name of YHWH your God in vain.” Although its original meaning was probably that one must keep one’s vow when swearing by God’s name, it was soon taken to mean that one should not use the sacred name frivolously or irreverently, and therefore to avoid the risk of vio-

lating this commandment it simply was not used in conversation. The pronunciation of the divine name was still known to all in the time of Jesus, however some substitute was always used to avoid uttering

it. This tradition continues until today, even among many secular Jews. The more orthodox even say *‘e-lo-KIM* in order to avoid saying *‘e-lo-HIM*, and English-speaking Jews often write “G-d” instead of “God.”<sup>5</sup>

## Vocalizing the Text

Until the early Middle Ages, Hebrew was written without vowels. As the knowledge of Hebrew declined, it became increasingly difficult for each generation to remember the pronunciation of words in the biblical text. By the sixth century A.D. there were only a few native Hebrew speakers left, and most Jews had only a passive knowledge of Hebrew. It was then that a system of vowel signs was developed by the Masoretes, the Jewish scholars of the period, to aid the reader in pronunciation.

The Masoretes used the vowel signs they had created to vocalize the text of the Hebrew Bible, which until then had been composed solely of consonants. In accordance with the



David Bivin, a member of the Jerusalem School, has lived and studied in Israel for twenty-nine years.

“...Jesus himself apparently always avoided the use of the divine name...”



custom observed since the third century B.C. when reading or reciting Scripture, they superimposed the vowel signs of the word  $\text{אֲדוֹנָי}$  (*'a-do-NAI*) upon the four consonants of God's name. This was to remind the reader he should not attempt to pronounce the unutterable name. Thus  $\text{יהוה}$  would be read as *'a-do-NAI*.<sup>5</sup>

When Christian scholars in Europe first began to study Hebrew, they misunderstood this warning device. Lacking even the most elementary knowledge of Jewish culture and custom, their blunder was inevitable. In 1518 A.D. in his *De arcanis catholicae veritatis*, a monumental work of Christian mysticism, the Italian theologian and Franciscan friar Galatinus, not realizing that the Masoretes had placed the vowel signs of another word with the consonants YHWH, fused the vowels of *'a-do-NAI* with the consonants of the divine name<sup>7</sup> and thus gave the Church "Jehovah," a word which has no meaning in Hebrew. The first consonant of the word, the "y" sound, was transliterated by "j" in Latin, and the third consonant, the "w" sound, by "v."

I believe that as Christians we should be sensitive to this ancient Jewish tradition. Although we may feel that Jewish exegetes of old were too pedantic in their interpretation of the third commandment, we must remember that Jesus himself apparently always avoided the use of the divine name by employing substitutes such as "Heaven" and "Power." Certainly we should not create new names for God such as "Jehovah" out of our ignorance of Jewish conventions.

To our embarrassment, we continue to perpetuate this error in Christian books, hymns, songs and translations of the Bible. The *American Standard Version* and *The Living Bible* use "Jehovah" for YHWH throughout, while translations such as the *King James Version*, *New English Bible*,

and *New Berkeley Version* use "Jehovah" only occasionally. The non-word "Jehovah" would be simply an amusing mistake if it did not illustrate so vividly Christians' continuing lack of understanding of Hebrew language and Jewish practice. JP

1. At the time when the Hebrew Bible was being composed, the  $\text{ו}$  (*vav*), the third letter of the tetragrammaton, was pronounced as a "w" rather than a "v" as in modern Hebrew.

2. Louis F. Hartman, "Names of God," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971), 7:680. See also Ray Pritz, "The Divine Name in the Hebrew New Testament," JP 4.2 (March/April 1991), 10-12.

3. Ibid. Cf. David Binin, "Jesus and the Oral Torah: The Unutterable Name of God," JP 1.5 (February 1988), 1-2.

4. If the tetragrammaton happened to appear in the biblical text either before or after the word  $\text{אֲדוֹנָי}$  (*'a-do-NAI*), then the Masoretes superimposed the vowels of  $\text{יְהוָה}$  (*ye-lo-HIM*, God) upon the tetragrammaton —  $\text{יְהוָה}$  (to be read *ye-lo-HIM*). Thus these two combinations,  $\text{יְהוָה אֲדוֹנָי}$  and  $\text{אֲדוֹנָי יְהוָה}$ , were pronounced *ye-lo-HIM 'a-do-NAI* and *'a-do-NAI ye-lo-HIM* respectively. In English translations of the Bible they are usually translated "the LORD God" and "Lord GOD."

5. Each letter in the Hebrew alphabet has a numerical value (see "Hebrew Nuggets, Lesson Seventeen:  $\text{ו}$  - *vav*," JP 2.5 [February 1989], 3), and Hebrew letters are used to cite verses and chapters of the Bible. However, the two combinations  $\text{טו}$  ( $10+5=15$ ) and  $\text{טז}$  ( $10+6=16$ ) are replaced in Bible texts by  $\text{טו}$  ( $9+6=15$ ) and  $\text{טז}$  ( $9+7=16$ ) respectively so as to prevent the possibility of God's name being taken in vain by reading the number  $\text{טו}$  as *yah* or the number  $\text{טז}$  as *yo* (which like *yah* is a theophoric designation).

6. There is one small difference between the vowels of *'a-do-NAI* and those of the tetragrammaton. The Masoretes altered the "ah" vowel of the first syllable so that readers would not see "yah" and inadvertently blurt out the unutterable name.

7. Hartman, loc. cit. See also Godfrey Edmond Silverman, "Galatinus, Pietro (Petrus) Columna," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 7:262-263.

## Meaning of the Unutterable Name

The root of  $\text{יהוה}$  (YHWH) is thought by many scholars to be  $\text{הוה}$  (*h-w-h*), a second millennium B.C. variant of the ninth-seventh centuries B.C. root  $\text{היה}$  (*h-y-h*), which means "to be." The tetragrammaton,  $\text{יהוה}$ , could be seen as a prefix form (third person, masculine, singular) of the verb, which would mean "he is." In that case, the name would be a statement that God exists and would

serve to emphasize the contrast between God and all other gods.

On the other hand,  $\text{יהוה}$  could be a causative form of the verb, which would mean "he causes to exist," emphasizing either that he is the present source of life or his role as creator (compare  $\text{יְהוָה יֵצַר שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ}$  [*ho-NEH sha-MA-yim va-'A-rets*, creator of heaven and earth], Gen. 14:19, 22).



# The Fallacy of Sacred Name Bibles

by David Bivin

There are a number of Christian teachers today who claim that God's name, spelled יהוה (*yhwh*) in Hebrew Scriptures, is being deliberately kept secret. In what seems to be an anti-Semitic attack, much of the blame for this "conspiracy" is laid at the feet of the Masoretes, the Jewish scholars of the sixth–ninth centuries A.D. who created vowel signs with which to vocalize the text of the Bible.

These teachers argue that it is wrong to translate God's name "LORD," and that English Bible translators should use "Yahweh" instead. To assist in disseminating their point of view, they have published a spate of "Sacred Name" or "Holy Name" versions of the Bible in which "Yahweh" is printed wherever יהוה appears in the Hebrew text.

## Overly Literal Translation

Much of their reasoning is based on overly literal, word-for-word translation of Hebrew passages from the Bible. For example, they assert that a person's salvation is dependent on his or her using and correctly pronouncing the Divine Name. This is based on the statement, "Everyone who calls on the name of YHVH will be saved" in Joel 2:32 (quoted in Acts 2:21). Thus, according to their interpretation, one cannot call out to God and be saved without the knowledge of that name. Actually, however, "the name of YHVH" is probably just a synonym for "YHVH," a way of avoiding speaking of God too familiarly or directly.

Another "sacred name" proof-text is Psalms 9:10, "Those who know your name will trust in you." This passage appears to these teachers to indicate that people cannot trust in God unless they know how to properly pronounce his name. Again, however, "your name" is most likely a way of avoiding the more direct "you."

Another text put forward in support of those who teach the importance of "preserving the Sacred Name" is, "How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds? They think the dreams they tell one another will make my people forget my name, just as

their fathers forgot my name through Baal worship" (Jer. 23:26–27). The conclusion reached on the basis of this passage is that forgetting God's name is a horrible sin. In reality, however, the passage would be better translated as "They think the dreams they tell one another will make my people forget me."

"The name of YHVH" can be the equivalent of "YHVH," and "your name" can be a synonym for "you." This is proven by parallel passages in Scripture in which the identical expression appears, once with "name" and once without. For example, Zephaniah 3:12 reads, "those who take refuge in the name of YHVH," but Psalms 5:11 has "those who take refuge in you."

A similar Hebraic expression, "call his name," appears in the New Testament (Lk. 1:13, 31) and is usually translated literally: "you shall call his name John," "you shall call his name Jesus." While this is beautiful idiomatic Hebrew, in English one would say simply, "you shall call him John/Jesus." The word "name" disappears from such Hebrew idioms in good English translations.

## Pronunciation

It should be pointed out that the Divine Name always appears without vowels in the Hebrew Scriptures, and no one today, neither Jew nor Christian, knows with absolute certainty what was the original pronunciation of the tetragrammaton YHVH. Although scholars are relatively certain that the first syllable of the Divine Name was pronounce *yah*, and many scholars have indeed suggested that the name was probably originally pronounced *yahweh*, those who advocate the exclusive use of "Yahweh" have no certainty as to its pronunciation.

Every "Sacred Name" proponent I know of also teaches that the true name of Jesus in the

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**"Much of their reasoning is based on overly literal, word-for-word translation of Hebrew passages from the Bible."**



# No Room in the Inn?



*Shmuel Safrai is professor of Jewish History at the Hebrew University. With his vast knowledge of rabbinic and secular material of the Second Temple period, he is uniquely qualified to answer many of the questions posed by readers of the Gospels. In this column he presents some of his insights into the Jewish background to the Gospels.*

What was an inn like at the time of Jesus' birth? Did it provide separate rooms, or was it like a dormitory with one big room?

by Shmuel Safrai

**B**ethlehem is hardly mentioned in rabbinic literature. In the time of Jesus it was probably a small village of a few hundred residents, and consequently had only one inn.

The typical inn in such a small settlement had one room with no allowance made for separate quarters for men and women. However the boarders did not have to undress in mixed company, because they slept in their clothes. The men, for instance, removed their *talit* or outer heavy woolen garment and slept in their *haluk*, their lightweight, inner robe (see "The Hem of His Garment," *JP* 1.7 [April 1988], 2). Families slept together on simple mats thrown on the dirt floor. The innkeeper provided little more than space, but at least it was shelter and protection from marauders. The rabbinic ruling was that a man could

not sleep in the same room with two women, unless one was his wife (Mishnah, Kiddushin 4:12). It was assumed that this would prevent promiscuity. However, it was considered acceptable that when a man was on a journey he could sleep in an inn in the same room with other women even when unaccompanied by a wife. The inn was viewed as a public place because of its open arrangement.

Luke 2:7 states that there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn, but this may only have been the excuse the innkeeper gave. Probably the real reason the Bethlehem innkeeper refused to accept the couple was because Mary was obviously pregnant. The innkeeper could not be sure how long Mary and Joseph would stay, and if Mary had given birth while at the inn the other guests would have been inconvenienced by having to leave the room. Having no alternative, Mary was forced to give birth in a stable. **JP**

*The traditional "Inn of the Good Samaritan" alongside the modern Jericho-Jerusalem highway.*

*(Photo: Werner Braun)*





# The Shema in Early Jewish Teaching

by Marvin R. Wilson

**H**ear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Deut. 6:4), known as the Shema, is a foundational teaching of both Judaism and Jesus.

A careful investigation of early sources suggests that Deuteronomy 6:4 must have been the first portion from the Hebrew Bible that Jesus committed to memory. According to the Babylonian Talmud

(Sukkah 42<sup>a</sup>), Jewish boys were taught this biblical passage as soon as they could speak. Since the Talmud specifies that "the father must teach him [i.e., the son]," we may confidently assume that Joseph, Jesus' earthly father, was responsible for the fulfilling of this task.

This text from the Torah of Moses comprises only six Hebrew words: שְׁמָע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד (*she-MA' yis-ra'EL 'a-do-NAI 'e-lo-HE-nu 'a-do-NAI 'e-HAD*). It is important to note that it is located in the book of Deuteronomy, which in Jesus' day was the most widely circulated and popular book of the Pentateuch.

We know that Deuteronomy carried this broad influence for two main reasons:

1) the New Testament has more quotations from Deuteronomy than from any other book of Moses, and 2) among the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran, more separate copies of the scroll of Deuteronomy were found than of any other Mosaic writing.

But the importance of the book of Deuteronomy is not limited to the early childhood of Jesus and others from his period. As an adult, Jesus, at the beginning of his ministry, quotes three times from this book in mustering spiritual support in response to the three temptations of Satan (Mt. 4:1–11).

Today, Deuteronomy 6:4 is referred to as the *Shema* (literally, "Hear!"), based on the verbal imperative at the start of the verse.

The Shema is often called the watchword of Israel's faith because it declares the oneness and uniqueness of God. Since this verse held such great significance in the life and teachings of Jesus (see Mk. 12:29) as well as in the history of the Jewish people, it is important that we explore its background and meaning in greater depth.

The Shema is not a prayer (rabbinic literature never refers to "praying" the Shema) but a confession of faith or a creed.

The practice of reciting the Shema daily is firmly established in the Mishnah (ca. 200 A.D.). The important place of the Shema in Jewish religious experience is underscored by the fact that the entire Mishnah begins,

"From what time in the evening may the Shema be recited?" (Berachot 1:1). But there is also evidence of the Shema's use during and even before the New Testament era, for the Letter of Aristeeas (ca. 150 B.C.) alludes to it. In addition, the Mishnah states that the Shema was recited by the priests in the Temple — indication of its use prior to 70 A.D. (Tamid 4:3, 5:1).

As the Shema developed it came to include three passages from the Torah of Moses. The first (Deut. 6:4–9) proclaims God's oneness (v. 4) and calls Israel to love him and obey his commandments (vv. 5–9). The second (Deut. 11:13–21) details the rewards promised for obeying these commandments and the punishments for disobeying them. The third (Num. 15:37–41) sets forth the law concerning tassels on the garments as a reminder to keep "all the commandments of the LORD" (v. 39).

In accordance with Deuteronomy 6:7 the Shema was recited twice a day, in the morning and evening: "when you lie down and when you rise" (cf. Mishnah, Berachot 1:1–2). During the talmudic period much rabbinic debate focused on the question of

**"The Shema is not a prayer ... but a confession of faith or a creed."**



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**“...the main focus of the Shema in its original setting — ancient Near Eastern polytheism — is clearly upon the fact that there is one God.”**

precisely how long after dawn or sunset the Shema should be read (Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 2<sup>a</sup>–3<sup>a</sup>, 9<sup>b</sup>). The School of Shammai also debated the School of Hillel about the proper posture for reciting it (Berachot 10<sup>b</sup>–11<sup>a</sup>; cf. Deut 6:7). Women, slaves and children were exempt from the obligation to recite the Shema (Mishnah,

Berachot 3:3). The Shema was recited as the last utterance of martyrs being led to their death, and to this day it is recited at the conclusion of deathbed confessions. Thus, Jews are taught to have the name of God on their lips from early childhood to the moment of death.

The Mishnah teaches that the morning recitation of the Shema is to be preceded by two benedictions and concluded by one.

In the evening it is

preceded by two and followed by two (Berachot 1:4, 2:2). The main theme of the morning benedictions is praise to God for creating the light of day, giving the Torah and redeeming Israel. The evening blessings likewise give thanks for physical and spiritual light, but also attest to the truths of God and plead for a peaceful rest.

Of the 5,845 verses in the Pentateuch, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” most clearly sounds the historic keynote of all Judaism. This fundamental truth and leitmotif of God’s uniqueness prompts one to respond by fulfilling the fundamental obligation to love God (Deut. 6:5). Accordingly, when Jesus was asked about the “most important commandment,” his reply did not contradict this central theme of Judaism (Mk. 12: 28–34). With 613 individual statutes of the Torah from which to choose, Jesus cited the Shema, including the command to love God; but he also extended the definition of the “first” commandment to include love for one’s neighbor (Lev. 19:18).

Scholars have differed in their renderings of Deuteronomy 6:4 (the *New International Version* and *Revised Standard Version* give four possible translations, including those in the margin). Some

translators have considered these six Hebrew words to be one nominative sentence, while others have taken them as two. Perhaps of greater importance, however, is the implication of the final word, *ʾe-HAD* (“one”).

Jewish interpreters have largely understood the phrase “the LORD is one” to carry either or both of the following emphases: 1) It is an affirmation of monotheism. In opposition to their polytheistic environment, the Hebrews were to know that there was only one God, not many. The LORD is one in that there is no other God. Cyrus H. Gordon has suggested further that Deuteronomy 6:4 means not only that there is one God, but that “One” is his name (cf. Zech. 14:9; see Cyrus H. Gordon, “His Name is ‘One,’” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 29 [1970], 198ff.). 2) It declares the uniqueness of God. The LORD is the Supreme Being, wholly unlike all other things in the universe, which have been created by him.

In the Hebrew Scriptures *ʾe-HAD* usually refers to a single unit such as a person. Certain interpreters have insisted, however, that *ʾe-HAD* may also be used to designate a collective unit (e.g., Gen. 1:5, 2:24; Num. 13:23), a diversity within unity.

Thus some Christian scholars have found room for trinitarian monotheism in the *ʾe-HAD* of Deuteronomy 6:4. So interpreted, God is seen as a complex unity, not simply as numerically one. It must be remembered, however, that the main focus of the Shema in its original setting — ancient Near Eastern polytheism — is clearly upon the fact that there is one God (cf. Deut. 4:39). God alone claims the unequalled love and obedience of all his creation. **JP**

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# Reading with Grace – חֶסֶד

In the twenty-seven lessons of the “Hebrew Nuggets” series, we have introduced fourteen Hebrew letters with the help of nine words. We will learn the remaining eight letters of the Hebrew alphabet by means of six more words. We begin the study of the word חֶסֶד (*HE-sed*).

by David Bivin

The first letter of חֶסֶד (*HE-sed*, goodness, kindness; grace) is the ח (*het*), a guttural which we learned in Lesson 23 in the word מָשִׁיחַ (*ma-SHI-ah*, Messiah). Under the *het* is a new vowel symbol in the shape of three dots. This symbol, called סֶגוֹל (*se-GOL*), stands for the short “e” sound as in the word net.

The second letter of the word חֶסֶד is a new letter. Called סָמֶךְ (*SA-mek*), it is one of two Hebrew “s” sounds. We encountered the other when we learned that the *shin* with a dot at its upper left corner (שׁ) is pronounced as “s.” *SA-mek* is the fifteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and its numerical value is sixty.

Under the *SA-mek* is a *se-GOL*, the same cluster of three dots that appeared under the first letter of the word. Together the *SA-mek* and *se-GOL* are pronounced *se* as in set.

Most Hebrew nouns of two or more syllables are accented on the last syllable. However nouns such as חֶסֶד (*HE-sed*), which end in two *se-GOLs*, are the most prominent exception to this rule. Such nouns are accented on the syllable before the last. (Note the capitalization of the letters in the first syllable of our transliteration — *HE-sed*.)

## Reading Practice

With the addition of the *SA-mek* to your collection of Hebrew letters, you can now read the following words:

כּוֹס (*kos*), “cup; goblet; drinking glass.” In biblical Hebrew this word was feminine in gender. The same is true in modern Hebrew, but in the time of Jesus כּוֹס was masculine. That is why the Haggadah, the Passover ritual, whose nucleus dates from the Second Temple period, contains what appears to many Israelis to be a grammatical mistake: כּוֹס ראשון (*kos ri-SHON*, [the] first cup [of wine]), using the masculine form of the number, instead of כּוֹס ראשונה (*kos*

*ri-sho-NAH*), *kos* with the feminine form of the number.

כִּס ( *kis*),

“purse; pocket.”

Names of professions

are formed in He-

brew by placing a

*pa-TAH* under the first consonant of the

root, and a *ka-MATS* under the second.

Therefore כִּיס (*ka-YAS*), from the same

root as כִּס, is the word for pickpocket.

כַּזַּח (*KA-as*), “anger, rage.”

*KA-as* and

the two previous practice words call to mind

the rabbinic saying, “A person is known by

three things: by his cup (*kos*), his purse (*kis*)

and his anger (*KA-as*)” (Babylonian Talmud,

Eruvin 65<sup>b</sup>). That is, a person’s character can

be determined by his tendency towards drink-

ing, by the way he deals with money, and by

the way he behaves when angry.

The basic sense of the root כָּנָס (*k-n-s*) is “to

enter.” Therefore other words with this same

root all have something to do with entering.

כְּנִיסָה (*ke-ni-SAH*), for example, is the word for

“entrance.” בֵּית כְּנִסָּה (*bet ke-NE-set*) is a syna-

gogue. כְּנִסְיָה (*ke-ne-si-YAH*) is a church, and

Israel’s Parliament is called הַכְּנֶסֶת (*hak-NE-set*,

the Knesset).

אֶבֶס (*e-VUS*), “manger.” “The ox knows his

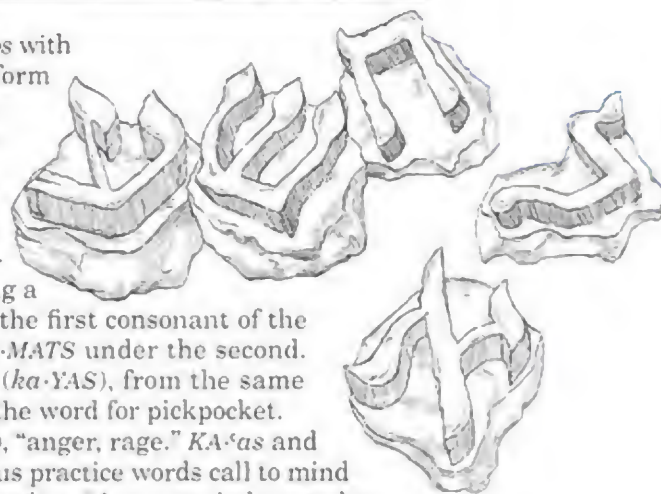
owner, and the donkey his master’s *e-VUS*”

(Isaiah 1:3).

אַמּוֹס (*a-MOS*), “Amos,” the name of the

prophet from Tekoa and a common first name

of modern Israelis.



## Words with DA·let

You may have noticed that the first letter of the name of every Hebrew letter is the same as the letter itself. The last letter of חֶסֶד is a new letter. It is called דָּלֶת (*DA·let*), and is the Hebrew “d” sound. It is the fourth letter of



the Hebrew alphabet and therefore carries the numerical value of four.

Having learned the *DA-let*, you can now read many other words. Those given below are presented as examples of the many words you now have the ability to read. It isn't necessary for you to remember these words — they are included only to provide practice in recognition of letter and vowel symbols.

קָבוֹד (*ka-VOD*), "glory; honor." This noun is derived from the same root and is thus related to the adjective קָבֵד (*ka-VED*, heavy). Spelled exactly the same, the noun קֶבֶד (*ka-VED*) is the word for "liver." The liver is the body's largest gland and is therefore referred to as the "heavy" gland.

עֵד (*ed*), "witness." The plural of this masculine noun is עֵדִים (*e-DIM*) — the Hebrew masculine plural is formed by adding an "eem" sound to a masculine singular noun. Abstract nouns are often created in Hebrew by adding the suffix יוֹת (ut). The word for "testimony," עֵדוּת (*e-DUT*), was created in this way.

תַּלְמִיד (*tal-MID*), "student, disciple." The plural of this masculine noun is תַּלְמִידִים (*tal-mi-DIM*). From the same root, לָמַד (*l-m-d*, to study, learn), comes תַּלְמוּד (*tal-MUD*, Talmud), the great compendium of rabbinic lore.

תְּהִיָּה (*to-DAH*) is "thank-you" in Hebrew.

דָּוִד (*da-VID*), "David," the eighth and youngest son of יֵשׁוּעַ (*yi-SHAI*, Jesse) of Beth-

lehem, who was anointed by Samuel to be king of Israel (I Sam. 16:1–13).

In Hebrew the word for "uncle" is דּוֹד (*dod*). I Samuel 14:50 says that Ner was דּוֹד שָׁאֵל (*dod sha-UL*, [the] uncle [of] Saul). דּוֹד (*dod*) has another important meaning — beloved; lover. Some scholars suggest that the word *dod* originally was baby talk. In Akkadian, an ancient Semitic language that is closely related to Hebrew, the equivalent of *dod* is *dadu* which has the meaning "beloved." This Akkadian word is amazingly similar to the English "daddy" which linguists think came into existence around 1500 A.D. in imitation of baby talk. Could "daddy" possibly have much more ancient roots than linguists suppose and be related to the Hebrew word *dod*?

Notice that דָּוִד (*da-VID*) and דּוֹד (*dod*) are composed of the same three letters — written without vowels, the two words are identical. It is generally assumed that the meaning of the name *da-VID* is "beloved." David was beloved of God, "a man after my own heart" (Acts 13:22). דּוֹדִי (*do-DI*) is "my uncle" or "my lover." In the biblical love poem, Song of Songs, we find the simple yet beautiful expression of love, אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי (*a-NI le-do-DI ve-do-DI li*, I to my lover and my lover to me), traditionally, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (Song 6:3). Many secular Israelis have had this verse inscribed on their wedding rings. **JP**

### The Fallacy of Sacred Name Bibles

(continued from page 7)

New Testament, and thus the form Christians are obligated to use when pronouncing that name, is *Yahshua*. They say that Jesus' name is composed of two parts: *Yah* (an abbreviation of *Yahweh*), plus *Shua* (Savior). Thus, they claim, "Yahshua" signifies *Yahweh-Savior*.

The attempt to establish a linguistic link between *Yahweh*, the supposed original pronunciation of the tetragrammaton, and *Yeshua*, the Hebrew form of Jesus' name, is rooted in a misunderstanding. The initial syllable of יֵשׁוּעַ (*ye-SHU-a'*, Jesus) is not *yah* but *ye*. *Yeshua* is an abbreviation of the earlier יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (*ye-ho-SHU-a'*, Joshua). *ye-ho-SHU-a'* apparently was first shortened to *yo-SHU-a'* as Hebrew speakers began to drop their "h"s; and then, because the Hebrew language has an aversion to the "o" vowel being immediately followed by the "u" vowel, the first syllable was reduced from *yo* to *ye*.

By the end of the biblical period the name *ye-SHU-a'* already had begun to replace *ye-ho-SHU-a'*. Joshua the son of Nun is himself once referred to as "ye-SHU-a' the son of Nun"

(Neh. 8:17). The form *ye-SHU-a'* (transliterated "Jeshua" in English versions of the Bible) appears twenty-nine times in Scripture, twenty-seven times in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and once each in I and II Chronicles. (All four books are dated to 400–450 B.C.) Only once, in I Chronicles 7:27, does the form *ye-ho-SHU-a'* appear in these same books.

The claim that one is in error unless one uses solely "Yahweh" when referring to God is a form of legalism. The use of correct formulas and correct pronunciations is very important in magic rites, but not in one's relationship with the God of Israel, who is "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness" (Ex. 34:6).

The theology of the "sacred name" teachers is a good example of the way overly literal translations of Bible passages are apt to influence us in wrong directions. In this case numerous Scripture texts taken at face value have combined to produce a misguided approach that is more concerned with God's name and its proper or original pronunciation than with God himself. **JP**



# A Measure of Humility

One of the many results of synoptic research is the discovery of parallels between the sayings of Jesus and those of other Jewish sages. A knowledge of these parallels can provide added insight into what Jesus was teaching.

by David Bivin

Jesus said, "With the measure you measure, it will be measured to you" (Mt. 7:2; Lk. 6:38), a saying that was used by the sages to teach the moral principle that the way we treat others will be the way God treats us. The fuller context of Jesus' saying is, "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you judge you will be judged, and with the measure [literally, measuring vessel] you [use to] measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you see the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?" In other words, the standard of justice we use will be the same standard used by God in meting out reward and punishment to us.

The context in which the almost identical rabbinic version of this saying appears provides further insight into the saying's meaning: "With the measure that a man uses to measure, they measure to him.... Samson went after [the desire of] his eyes, therefore the Philistines put out his eyes.... Absalom gloried in his hair, therefore he was hanged by his hair...." (Mishnah, Sotah 1:7-8).

An exhaustive list of the similarities between rabbinic literature and the synoptic Gospels would fill a book of its own, but the sampling presented in this column should provide some idea of the rabbinic quality of Jesus' teaching. From these and many other examples, it seems clear that Jesus, like the other sages of his day, not only helped to preserve the sayings that had been transmitted to him by his teachers, but also contributed to the tradition he had inherited by making innovations of his own.

## General Pool of Motifs

The existence of parallels does not necessarily mean in each case that the sages and Jesus borrowed directly from

each other. There was a general pool of literary motifs, stock stories, phrases and words from which the ancient teachers of Israel chose. Although a saying was transmitted in the name of a sage who lived several generations after Jesus, the sage may have independently preserved a rabbinic tradition that predates Jesus, perhaps the very same tradition upon which Jesus drew.

## Rabbinic Teachings

According to Luke 14:11, Jesus said: "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Rabbinic literature preserves very similar statements in at least two places.

Hillel, who lived a generation before Jesus, used to say: "My humiliation is my exaltation and my exaltation is my humiliation" (Leviticus Rabbah 1:5 [ed.

# Rabbinic Parallels

Margulies, p. 17]). Hillel's disciples and the disciples of his disciples, referred to collectively as "the house of Hillel" (בית הלל, *bet hi-LEL*), were noted for their humility:

For three years there was a dispute between the house of Shammai and the house of Hillel, the former asserting, "The halachah is in accordance with our opinion," and the latter contending, "The halachah is in agreement with our views." Then a *bat kol* [heavenly voice] issued this decree, "[The words of] both are the words of the living God, but the halachah is in agreement with the rulings of the house of Hillel." Since, however, both are the words of the living God, what was it that entitled the house



of Hillel to have the halachah fixed in agreement with their rulings? — Because they were gracious and modest, they studied their own rulings and those of the house of Shammai, and were even so humble as to mention the rulings of the house of Shammai before theirs.... This teaches you that whoever humbles himself, the Holy One, blessed be he, raises him up, but whoever exalts himself, the Holy One, blessed be he, humbles him. (Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 13<sup>b</sup>)

Preceding Jesus' exhortation to humility in Luke 14 are these instructions:

When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the place of honor, for a person more

distinguished than you may have been invited. In that case, the person who invited you both might come and say to you, "Give this man your place." Then, humiliated, you

would have to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and take the lowest place, so that when your host comes he will say to you, "Friend, move up higher." Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. (Luke 14:8–10)

Significantly, Hillel's words in Leviticus Rabbah about the importance of humility are also preceded by instructions concerning where to seat oneself:

Rabbi Yehoshua of Sikhnin in the name of Rabbi Levi expounded the verse, "[Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence, and do not claim a place among great men;] it is better for him to say to you, 'Come up here,' than for him to humiliate you before a nobleman" [Prov. 25:7]. Rabbi Akiva taught in the name of Rabbi Shim'on ben Azzai: "Move two or three places lower and there sit down. Move down so that you will be told, 'Move up,' rather than move up and be told, 'Move down.' It is better for you to be told, 'Move up, move up,' than for you to be told, 'Move down, move down.'" (Leviticus Rabbah 1:5 [ed. Margulies, pp. 16–17]) JP

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tuagintal equivalents can widely miss the mark. Here the context demands Gehenna.

**In his article in the Jul/Aug 1990 issue, "Sabbath Breakers?" Prof. Shmuel Safrai states that "...the omer was offered at the Temple on the 16th of Nisan, the second day of the Passover festival." The reference Prof. Safrai uses, Leviticus 23:15 which says, "From the day after the Sabbath..." does not say the day after the Passover Sabbath, which is Nisan 15th. Verse 16 says to count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath. This is the weekly Sabbath or Saturday. Now if you count backwards from this Sabbath you have to come to another weekly Sabbath/Saturday — the Sabbath in verse 15 must be a Saturday, a weekly Sabbath and not the Passover Sabbath. So the Feast of Firstfruits is always on a Sunday — the day after the Sabbath — and Shavuot is always on a Sunday. How else can you count off seven weeks up to the day after the seventh Sabbath? For verse 15 says to "count off seven full weeks." How do you figure the 16th of Nisan as the day of Firstfruits — sheaf of the wave offering?**

—James Shaff, Santa Fe, New Mexico, U.S.A.

#### Shmuel Safrai responds:

Thank you for your question. Your calculations are correct, and both the Sadducees and the Essenes understood the commandment that way. Today's Samaritans and the Karaites still interpret the commandment the same way, and they always observe Shavuot on a Sunday. However, the Pharisees, and no doubt Jesus too, understood it differently.

The observance of the holiday of Shavuot or Pentecost is a biblical commandment, but unlike other holidays, no specific day or month is prescribed. Consequently, the date of Shavuot was the focus of one of the fiercest of many debates between the Pharisees and Sadducees. The controversy revolved around the interpretation of Leviticus 23:15–16: "From the day on which you bring the sheaf of wave offering — the day after the sabbath — you shall count unto you seven sabbaths. There must be seven complete sabbaths. Up to the day after the seventh sabbath count fifty days, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD."

The difference of opinion concerns the meaning of שַׁבָּת (*sha·BAT*, sabbath) in this passage. Does sabbath here mean Saturday, or sabbath as a day of rest? Both meanings are possible in Hebrew. The Sadducees understood *sha·BAT* literally as Saturday; therefore "the

day after the sabbath," the first day of the counting of the *omer*, obviously would always be a Sunday. According to their calendar, then, Shavuot would always fall on the seventh Sunday after Passover. However, the Pharisees interpreted *sha·BAT* in this passage as "the day of rest" of the holiday, the first day of Passover, a day on which work was forbidden. According to them, the *omer* would be offered on the sixteenth of Nisan, the second day of Passover, and Shavuot would fall on the sixth

of Sivan. It is worth pointing out that already in the second century C.E. the Jewish translators of the Septuagint rendered "the day after the sabbath" in Leviticus 23:11 as "the day after the first day [of the festival]."

The dating of the *omer* offering was very consequential for Temple worship. Its date determined the date of Shavuot when the first fruits of the wheat harvest were offered to the LORD. Because the *omer* was brought to the Temple and offered there, its date determined the order of the Temple service.

The issue was finally resolved in favor of the Pharisees, and until today orthodox Jews begin counting the *omer* on the second day of Passover. The general population, who supported the Pharisees and hated the Sadducees, considered this such an important victory that it was celebrated for eight days (Megillat Ta'anit 2). In other areas of daily life the rulings of the Pharisees also were practiced, and although there were bitter controversies, eventually the Pharisaic halachah prevailed even in the major areas of Temple worship. Josephus states that "all prayers and sacred rites of divine worship are performed according to their [the Pharisees'] exposition" (*Antiquities* 18:15), and that the Sadducees "submit to the formulas of the Pharisees, since otherwise the masses would not tolerate them" (*Antiquities* 18:17). JP

*JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE welcomes the opinions of its readers. JP reserves the right to edit readers' letters for length and clarity.*

## Transliteration Key

### Hebrew & Aramaic

Syllables of transliterated words are separated by dots.

Capitalization is

used to indicate the

accented syllable in

words of more than

one syllable. See p.

11 of the Nov/Dec

1989 issue for a full

description of the

transliteration sys-

tem used in JERU-

SALEM PERSPECTIVE.

### Consonants

א - ' (silent)

ב - b

ג - g

ד - d

ה - h (or silent)

ו - v

ז - z

ח - h (voiceless

guttural)

ט - t

י - y (or silent)

כ - k

ך - k

ל - l

מ - m

נ - n

ס - s

ע - ' (voiced

guttural)

פ - p

ף - f

צ - ts

ץ - ts

ק - k

ר - r

ש - sh

ת - t

ת - t

ת - t

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ת - t

א - a (like a in

father)

א - e (like e in net,

or e in hey, or

somewhere in

between)

א - e (like e in

net)

א - i (like i in

ski)

א - o (like o

in bone)

א - u (like u in

flu)

א - ' (silent, or as

short as e in hap-

pening, or as long

as e in net)

### Diphthongs

א - ai

א - oi

א - ui

### Greek

Transliterations

are based on the

Society of Bibli-

cal Literature

system.



# International Synoptic Society

**T**he International Synoptic Society supports the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research by serving as a vehicle through which interested individuals can participate in the School's research.

The Society raises financial support for publication of the Jerusalem School's research, such as the *Jerusalem Synoptic Commentary*; facilitates informal discussion groups focusing on the synoptic Gospels; sponsors student research assistants and other volunteers who work with the Jerusalem School.

Annual membership in the Society is: Regular £60 or US\$100; Fellow £180 or \$300; Sponsor £300 or \$500; Patron £600 or \$1000; Lifetime membership £3000 or \$5000 and over. Membership dues can be paid in monthly or quarterly installments, and in most currencies (see box at bottom of page 2).

Members of the Society receive a beautiful certificate of membership and free subscription to JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE. They also are entitled to unique privileges such as pre-publication releases of *Commentary* materials including preliminary Hebrew reconstructions with English translation of stories in the conjectured biography of Jesus. Major publications of the Jerusalem School will be inscribed with Society members' names.

Checks should be made payable to "Jerusalem School" and designated "ISS." Members in the United States can receive a tax-deductible receipt by sending their dues via either of the Jerusalem School's U.S. affiliates:

Center for Judaic-Christian Studies  
P.O. Box 293040, Dayton, OH 45429

Centre for the Study of Biblical Research  
P.O. Box 1896, Monrovia, CA 91017.

## Synoptic Discussion Groups

Individuals who are interested in the continuing research of the Jerusalem School may augment their studies by participating in a synoptic discussion group coordinated by the International Synoptic Society.

These groups meet regularly to exchange views on current research presented in JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE. In addition, a group may decide to learn Hebrew together, share study resources or pursue its own Gospel investigations.

Attendance is open to everyone. Since the discussion groups are not formally linked to the International Synoptic Society, membership in the Society is not a requirement for attending or leading a group.

# The Jerusalem School

**T**he Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research (מכון תל אביב למחקר סينوپטי) is a consortium of Jewish and Christian scholars who are examining the synoptic Gospels within the context of the language and culture in which Jesus lived. Their work confirms that Jesus was a Jewish sage who taught in Hebrew and used uniquely rabbinic teaching methods.

The Jerusalem School scholars believe the first narrative of Jesus' life was written in Hebrew, and that it can be successfully recovered from the Greek texts of the synoptic Gospels. The School's central objective is to retrieve the original biography of Jesus. This is an attempt to recover a lost document from the Second Temple period, a Hebrew scroll which, like so much Jewish

literature of the period, has been preserved only in Greek.

As a means to its objective, the Jerusalem School is creating a detailed commentary on the synoptic Gospels which will reflect the renewed insight provided by the School's research. Current research of Jerusalem School members and others is presented in the pages of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE.

The Jerusalem School was registered in Israel as a non-profit research institute in 1985. Its members are Prof. David Flusser, Dr. Robert L. Lindsey, Prof. Shmuel Safrai, David Bivin, Dr. Randall J. Buth, Dr. Weston W. Fields, Dr. R. Steven Notley, Dwight A. Pryor, Halvor Ronning, Mirja Ronning, Prof. Chana Safrai and Prof. Bradford H. Young.

